

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION ACT IS NOW IN FORCE

The law which promises to have a significant impact upon preserving the world's wildlife went into effect June 3, under the guardianship of the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

On that date, the Department's regulations to implement the Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 were published in the Federal Register.

With the law now in force, any importation of wildlife species found by Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel to be threatened with world-wide extinction is forbidden except for certain scientific and educational purposes or for propagation to preserve the species.

At present, the Secretary has found 118 birds, 98 mammals, 22 reptiles and amphibians, 8 fish and 1 mollusk to be endangered worldwide.

"By regulating the international traffic in wildlife, this legislation will declare war on poachers of endangered species" Secretary Hickel said.

Documentary proof that imported wildlife has been taken legally in the country of origin will be required beginning August 3.

To facilitate enforcement, fish and wildlife imports from overseas will be restricted to six ports of entry: New York, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Orleans. Wildlife from Canada can enter at 25 locations, from Mexico at 7. Tampa, Fla., is an additional port of entry, for fish only, because of the heavy tropical fish trade.

Domestically, the statute also makes it a Federal offense to sell or purchase any reptile, amphibian, mollusk or crustacean taken contrary to State laws if it crosses State lines. These activities already were unlawful for fish, mammals and birds.

Secretary Hickel said that Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which is cooperating with the State wildlife agencies, has begun a comprehensive enforcement program to curb illegal traffic in alligator hides, both in the field where they are taken and through commercial channels.